...s of Ugandans and find genuine solutions. They

No matter the party one subscribes to, the contest f...

NUP on a self-destructive political path

DAVID MUKHOLI
JOURNALIST

By repeatedly raising expectations that fail to materialise, the National Unity Platform (NUP) risks placing itself on a path of political self-destruction.

The party promised to win elections, but failed. It promised to secure external support to gain power, but this has not happened.

It projects itself as capable of taking power, yet it has not done so. It promised that the world would intervene in Uganda's politics and pave the way for its rise to power, but that too has not happened. It says it has evidence proving that President Yoweri Museveni did not win the January 15 poll, yet it never went to court to present it.

NUP leaders and vocal supporters also promised to block President Museveni's inauguration on May 12, but failed; in fact, there was no attempt whatsoever. By making these and many other promises, the party is increasingly developing a pattern of raising supporters' hopes in vain. The consequence is a gradual decline in public trust and support.

The threat facing the party today is not its strong opponent, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), which carries the advantage of longevity and 40 years of transformation. The greater threat lies in the widening gap between NUP's rhetoric and political outcomes. This gap increasingly strains credibility, makes the party appear frivolous amongst supporters, and attracts ridicule from the wider public.

The situation is aggravated by contradictions regarding the election results. The party claims the elections were rigged, ignoring the fact that its presidential candidate won in some areas and the party secured parliamentary seats that made it the second-strongest political force in the country.

President Museveni, the NRM candidate, won the January 15 election with 7,946,722 votes (71.65%), while Robert Kyagulanyi of NUP received 2,741,238 votes (24.72%). In Parliament, NRM won 372 seats, while NUP secured 49, now 48 following the death of one MP.

Following the defeat, NUP leaders promised supporters that President Museveni would not be sworn in. The party claimed all efforts were being invested in blocking the inauguration because, according to it, Kyagulanyi had won and they had proof. Instead of presenting the proof, Kyagulanyi travelled abroad to engage with what he described as "friends and allies all over the world".

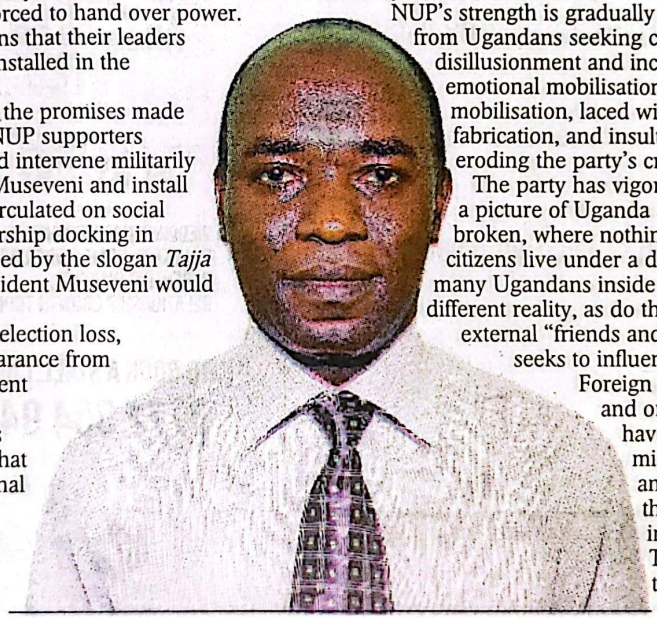
Supporters were made to believe Uganda would be isolated internationally and that President Museveni would be forced to hand over power. This raised expectations that their leaders would eventually be installed in the presidency.

This was a repeat of the promises made in 2021. At the time, NUP supporters believed the US would intervene militarily to remove President Museveni and install Kyagulanyi. Claims circulated on social media about a US warship docking in Mombasa, accompanied by the slogan *Tajja Kulaila*, meaning President Museveni would not be sworn in.

Following the 2026 election loss, Kyagulanyi's disappearance from Uganda and subsequent appearance in the US renewed expectations amongst supporters that he was seeking external assistance to end President Museveni's rule. Before this, he addressed audiences virtually at the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy and the Delegation to the AU-EU Parliamentary Assembly, where he claimed his victory had been stolen and that Uganda was unsafe.

His presence in the US has been used by NUP supporters, especially in the diaspora, to create narratives that the NRM leadership is under pressure and uncertain about what lies ahead because Kyagulanyi is engaging with "friends and allies". However, amidst this, he has also been spotted at lavish social events and parties, raising questions amongst some supporters about the seriousness of the mission.

Contrary to promises that President Museveni would not be sworn in, he was inaugurated on May 12 at a ceremony attended by foreign dignitaries. Their attendance undermined the narrative that Uganda and President Museveni are internationally isolated. Supporters were left questioning the claims they had been fed, while the wider public increasingly perceived NUP as unserious and driven more by rhetoric than results.



NUP's strength is gradually shifting away from Ugandans seeking change out of disillusionment and increasingly towards emotional mobilisation. However, this mobilisation, laced with exaggeration, fabrication, and insults, is gradually eroding the party's credibility.

The party has vigorously painted a picture of Uganda as unsafe and broken, where nothing works and citizens live under a dictatorship. Yet many Ugandans inside the country see a different reality, as do the foreigners and external "friends and allies" that NUP seeks to influence.

Foreign governments and organisations have agencies and missions in Uganda and can assess the situation independently. This explains why they all continue to work with Uganda and why their representatives attended the swearing-in ceremony.

Following President Museveni's swear... in came the swearing-in of MPs. Ironic... NUP MPs, whose party maintains that there was no election but rather a milit... operation, while simultaneously claimi... the election was rigged, are taking the oath and assuming office. If the party f... believed its own position, its MPs would have boycotted Parliament and demande... fresh elections. Instead, most have remained largely silent since the election, signalling their interest in serving as MP...

NUP is increasingly becoming known f... political grandstanding with limited impa... The party is highly rhetorical, making dramatic and confrontational statements to energise supporters and sustain momentum. However, these declaration... are rarely translated into reality.

The party is aspirational, which is positive, but it is also inconsistent. Its leadership has repeatedly made promise... and predictions that have not materialise... creating a widening gap between politi... messaging and outcomes..NUP has increasingly become a symbolic opposi... project centred on attacking President Museveni's longevity while offering few concrete alternatives. This creates the impression that the struggle is more abo... obtaining power than presenting a clear governing agenda.

NUP could gradually lose credibility, which is its political capital. Once repeatedly strained, it becomes harder to mobilise people even when genuine concerns exist. The experience of the Forum for Democratic Change serves as a pertinent example of how diminishing political capital weakens public confidence and erodes political momentum.

X - @dmuk...
dmukholi@gmail...

CamScanner